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WORKING PAPER

ATTACK ON NORTH VIETNAM
INDUSTRIAL INSTALLATIONS - A STUDY

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in collaboration with DIA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Attack on North Vietnam Industrial Installations	1
Section A. GENERAL.	1
Section B. SIGNIFICANCE OF ATTACKING MAJOR.	1
INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES	
Section C. WORLD REACTION TO ATTACKING NVN INDUSTRY	2
Section D. PRIORITY OF TARGETING OF INDUSTRY.	3
Enclosure A - Background of NVN Industry	5
Enclosure B - Map of Industrial Targets	10
Enclosure C - Salient Features of Industrial	11
Targets (target photos attached)	

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TOP SECRET

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ATTACK ON NORTH VIETNAM INDUSTRIAL INSTALLATIONS - A STUDY

A. GENERAL

The industrialization of North Vietnam (NVN) was initiated shortly after the country gained its independence in 1954. Heavy subsidization by the USSR and Communist China has made it possible to attain the present level of development. See Enclosure A for details of the development of industry in NVN.

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF ATTACKING MAJOR INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES

1. The industry of North Vietnam is not presently adaptable to or capable of producing a significant quantity of war materials. Therefore, an attack on the manufacturing industry per se would produce little or no military effect. However, the war between North and South Vietnam is primarily a military war with ideological objectives. This fact has been reiterated by the leaders of both North and South Vietnam to each other and to the world, although the military aspects of the ideological war are being escalated to major proportions while the differences in ideologies are not being exploited.

2. The industry of North Vietnam has been funded and built by the communist countries. The North Vietnamese ally themselves to the source of this aid and look upon the fruits of their first ten years of independence with pride and anticipation for the future. For the present, industrial output from the existing plants and their contribution to the NVN economy has been slowed almost to a standstill in many cases, because of the effective interdiction of transportation by the US fighter bombers. Nonetheless this condition is looked upon as temporary by the North Vietnamese. They believe when the troublesome Americans realize the futility of their aggression and leave, the country and its economy will again flourish and prosper. The North Vietnamese industry, a monument to communism in an ideological war, has been allowed to remain unmolested while South Vietnam (SVN) is being torn asunder with the help of the Viet Cong, the National Liberation Front and its

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET

American allies. The North Vietnamese position has been that time is their ally. A long term harassing war will wear down the already unenthusiastic US support. Any attempts to arbitrate on the part of the United States will dishearten the South Vietnamese and their insecure government will crumble.

3. Attacks on industrial targets in North Vietnam, starting in the sequence stated in Section D below, would indicate to the leadership of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and the world that:

- a. The sanctuary status previously enjoyed by NVN industry is over.
- b. The United States is willing to escalate to terminate the current war and preclude further aggression of a similar nature.
- c. The price is high for the NVN if they choose to continue their war of ideology on a full military scale.
- d. A new US goal has been established for military action.

C. REACTIONS TO TARGETING NORTH VIETNAM INDUSTRY IN THE WESTERN WORLD

4. The probable reaction of bombing North Vietnamese industry would be a loss of support from and the creation of political problems for certain European countries. France in particular, as well as some of the African and Asian nations would be openly condemnatory and might seek to formalize their protests in the United Nations.

5. The communist bloc reaction would in all probability depend on the sequence of the types of targets struck, their relation to the war effort, and their association with noncombatants. The Soviets would find their policy problems compounded by the US actions. Although the Soviets are committed to aid the DRV against air attacks, they would recognize their inability to do so effectively. They would probably continue to support the DRV but attempt to avoid overt involvement. Considerable question exists as to the CHICOM

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET

reaction. There is general agreement that increased aid from China would be forthcoming with intent to increase the cost to the US for further attacks against NVN. It is considered probable that the CHICOMs would offer all possible indirect support including the use of Chinese airfields but they too would avoid any direct contact with US forces that might be interpreted as a US - Chinese conflict.

6. It appears desirable and necessary to the cessation of hostilities to attack North Vietnamese industry. If at the appropriate time, which is fast approaching, a methodological attack is laid down on POL, power plants, industrial complexes outside of densely populated areas and industrial complexes inside populated areas in that order and in rapid sequence, conditions would be created that would force a change in the DRV policy of a long war of harassment. The number of DRV options would be minimized. Continuing DRV present policy of maintaining support for military operations in SVN would require logistic support that could not be maintained. Their allies obviously want to avoid direct confrontation with the United States and would not offer direct combat support. Diversionary actions such as establishing a front would be ineffective and deadly without air support of a high order. They could and probably would increase terrorist activity. An alternative for the entire Communist Bloc would be to create another major crisis in Europe to draw US forces from Southeast Asia and compound the US strategy. This alternative is considered unlikely.

D. PRIORITY OF TARGETING OF INDUSTRY

7. After appropriate public announcements of a policy change, (Target No. 76) the Thai Nguyen steel plant should be hit in its appropriate sequence. The plant is isolated from major populated areas and it is extremely vulnerable to bombing. Slight damage to the heavy equipment or furnaces causes major effects or production and causes a complete shutdown for long periods.

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET

8. After sufficient time has elapsed for the full import of the tactic to take effect, the Viet Tri Chemical Plant (Target No. 75) should be attacked in a similar fashion.

9. Within a time span of one month (Target No. 79) the Bac Giang Chemical Fertilizer Plant, (Target No. 78) the Haiphong Phosphate Plant, (Target No. 77) the Hanoi Machine Tool Plant, should be attacked.

See Enclosures B and C targeting data.

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